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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001464

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2018

TAGS: OSCE PREL PHUM KDEM RU IT

SUBJECT: ITALIANS URGE U.S. TO AGREE TO WATERED-DOWN
MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

REF: STATE 125626

Classified By: Barbara A. Leaf, Political Minister Counselor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel points to Elena Basile, MFA OSCE Office Director, on December 2. Basile noted the U.S. position and stated that she had just received instructions to contact post to urge the U.S. to accept softer language for the ministerial declaration to avoid a stalemate with Russia. The OSCE risked irrelevance if it could not find a way to continue dialogue with Russia and like-minded states. Therefore, it was critical that the organization find language for a ministerial declaration that would be acceptable to all member states - a position that Italy has taken in each of the previous three years. She admitted that such a declaration would be one that would omit all criticism of Russia and omit or gloss over events that had transpired over the summer between Georgia and Russia.

¶2. (C) Poloff stated that the U.S. position was a principled one. We did not believe trading values for stability was a long-term option. The West was not trying to encircle or isolate Russia, but it could not accept Russian behavior that was contrary to OSCE founding principles, nor could it accept Russia's unwillingness to comply with its legally binding obligations. A weak declaration would not encourage more constructive Russian behavior and could, in fact, send a signal to Moscow that it could act with impunity.

¶3. (C) Basile stated that she would pass the U.S. message but hoped that a compromise could still be found.

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